

THE MESSAGE OF THE CROSS

1 CORINTHIANS 1:18 • TV-016A

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1 Corinthians 1:18

“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.”

I want you to open your Bibles to the book of **1 Corinthians 1:18**.

My message today is: “What is the message of the cross?”

In **1 Corinthians 1:18** Paul says, *“The preaching (the message) of the cross is to them who are perishing foolishness. But to us who are being saved it is the power of God*

Now my friends; God holds the wisdom of this world in contempt. Paul writes in **verse 20**:
“Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?”

“Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the almighty unto perfection? It is as high as the heavens; what can you do? It is deeper than hell; what can you know?” Man’s wisdom tells him that there’s a way that seems right but God’s Word says, *“The end of that way is destruction.”*

And God says, *“Your thoughts are not my thoughts.”* God holds the wisdom of this world in utter, complete, contempt. *“Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?”*

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And then God holds the so-called morality of this world in utter contempt. He said in **Psalms 14:2**: *“The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there were any that did understand and seek God. They’re all gone aside. They are together become filthy. There is none that doeth good, no not one.”*

And even the world’s wealth and honor is held in utter contempt by our Lord. Where was He born, not in a mansion, but in a stable? Who were His parents, not people recognized, but unknown?

He grew up not in a university or in a statehouse but a carpenter shop. His disciples were not recognized men; they were unlearned, unknown, fisherman. He lived His life not in splendor and luxury but in the fields and in the mountains. He died not on the field of honor but between two thieves.

The Lord holds the wisdom, the honor, the fame, the morality of this world, in utter, complete, contempt.

Now they tell us today that the logical way to spread the Gospel of Christ is to seek the aid and the assistance of talent, worldly talent, prestige, and famous people of this world. If you can secure the support of politicians, movie stars, famous athletes and entertainers, then people will pay attention to your Gospel.

But our Lord did not enlist the support of the arm of flesh. Nor did His disciples court the arm of flesh but rather our Lord plainly said, *“It is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord.”* And again our Master said, *“Thou hast hid these things from the wise and the prudent but thou hast revealed them unto babes.”*

Our Lord holds in contempt the so-called wisdom of this world; it is foolishness. Our Lord holds in utter contempt this so-called morality of this world. Our Lord holds in utter contempt the wealth, prestige, and honor of this world. And then, our Lord holds the religion of this world in total contempt.

Now He picked corn and healed people on their Sabbath day. He drove the money-changers from the temple crying, *“My house shall be called a house of prayer. You’ve made it a den of thieves.”*

He called their great leaders, their great religious leaders and their teachers, *“hypocrites and vipers.”* He shunned their solemn meetings and preached by the side of the sea. How foolish, how utterly foolish in the sight of God, not only as man’s wisdom, not only as man’s so-called

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morality, not only as man's wealth. "*What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world (and all it has to offer) and loses his soul.*" What utter contempt; our Lord looks upon man's religion?

You think about it, with their flickering candles they would help me to see the sun? With their holy water and baptisms they would put away our sins? With their paintings and statues they would help us to see God the Spirit?

With their fleshly songs they would have us praise the eternal Redeemer? With their dead creeds and dead doctrines they would have us see Him who is life? With their high-pressured decisions they would have us experience a new birth?

With their rules and regulations they would make us holy? With their competitive church programs they would have us serve the living God? With their sectarianism they would have us fellowship in the Spirit?

Let us clear away man's wisdom and make room for the wisdom of God which is the message of the cross. Let us clear away man's so-called morality and righteousness and make room for God's righteousness which is the message of the cross.

Let us clear away man's honor, prestige, riches, and wealth, and make room for a heavenly honor, heavenly glory, and heavenly riches. That's the message of the cross.

Let us clear away the false religion of this world and make room for life which is in Christ Jesus. And that's the message of the cross. For the message of the cross, the preaching of the cross, the word of cross, "*Is to them that are perishing foolishness.*"

But little do they know; their wisdom is really foolishness. And their morality or righteousness is really foolishness. And their so-called wealth, honor, fame, and prestige, is foolishness. And their worldly religion is foolishness.

What is the message of the cross, what is the message of the cross? I'm talking about the cross of Calvary. I'm talking about the cross upon which our dear Redeemer died. I'm talking about the cross which Paul preached, "*Christ and Him crucified.*"

I'm not talking about an emblem that people wear about their necks as a superstitious, good-luck piece. I'm talking about the cross of Calvary. What is the message of the cross? What is the word that comes to us from Calvary?

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First of all: The cross says that God must be just!

The cross says that God will punish sin. The justice of God thunders from the cross more strongly than it thunders from Mount Sinai. The voice of justice is heard at the cross. Jesus Christ the Son of God hath taken our sins upon himself, numbered with the transgressors; therefore, God's justice says, "He must surely die." *"For the soul that sinneth shall surely die. The wages of sin is death. God will in no wise clear the guilty. And the judge of the earth shall do that which is right."*

The message of the cross is this; *"God will punish sin."* The message of the cross is this; the supreme justice can only be satisfied when every sin is punished according to its just deserts. *"God spared not His own Son."*

Sin shall be punished even when it's upon the sacred head of the Son of God. Sin will be punished even when it's put upon the holy person of His dear Son. God will punish sin. That's what the cross says. The cross says, "God must be just."

What is the message of the cross? This is true wisdom. What is the message of the cross? It says, God must be just and God must punish sin.

Secondly: "God will show mercy."

God will not only punish sin but God will show mercy, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. Having loved His own He loved them to the end, even death by the cross."*

God says, *"I will be merciful."* The cross says, "He will be merciful." God says, *"I will be gracious."* The cross says, "He will be gracious." *"The Son of man is come to seek and to save the lost. Thou shalt call His name Jesus; He shall save His people from their sins."*

And this, Paul said, *"It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation; Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners of whom I am chief. But God commended His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."*

What is the message of the cross; God will punish sin. What is the message of the cross? God will show mercy. That's what the cross says, mercy to the chief of sinners, mercy for the guilty, mercy for those who deserve no mercy.

And then what does the cross say? What is the message of the cross?

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Thirdly: The message of the cross is there is one sacrifice for sin, only one!

Paul wrote in **Hebrews 9**, *“Once in the end of the world hath He appeared; to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”*

“There’s none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Christ the Lord.” And Paul said, *“If any man preach any other Gospel, any other way, let him be accursed, even if it’s an angel from heaven.”*

Our Lord said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me.”* There is but one way of salvation. There is but one offering for sin. There is but one sacrifice for the guilty and that’s the blood of Calvary’s Lamb.

Peter said in **1 Peter 118**; *“We’re not redeemed with corruptible things such as silver and gold from our vain conversation received by tradition from our fathers but with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without spot and without blemish.”*

John wrote, *“This is the record God hath given us eternal life and that life is in His Son. He that hath the Son of God hath life.”*

What is the message of the cross?

Fourthly: The message of the cross is this; come sinner, come to Christ and welcome. There’s room at the cross for you.

**“Let not conscience make you linger
Nor a fitness fondly dream
All the fitness He requireth
Is to feel your need of Him.”**

This is the word of the cross, pardon for the guilty. This is the word of the cross, cleansing for the filthy. This is the word of the cross, salvation for the lost. He said, *“I’m not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”*

**“Come ye sinners poor and needy
Weak and wounded by the fall
Jesus ready stands to save you
Full of pity, love, and power.”**

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This is the message of the cross; this is the message of the cross: God will be just, God will punish sin. But thank God the cross says God will show mercy. God almighty will pardon the guilty.

What is the message of the cross? There's but one way of salvation. If God be pleased to bruise His Son on the cross of Calvary you can be sure there's no other way for a sinner to be saved but by the death and by the sacrifice and by the blood of His Son.

And the message of the cross is this; you're welcome to come, you're welcome to come. Christ said, "*You will not come to me that you might have life. I am the life. I'm the way, the truth, and I am the life, but you won't come to me that you might have life. You're welcome. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."*

All right, notice the second thing now. That's the message of the cross. What is the message of those who reject the cross? The Scripture says here; "*For the preaching (message) of the cross; what is it, I just told you, the message of the cross, what I just preached, "Is to them who are perishing, foolishness."*

They call the doctrine of the atonement, "*Foolishness.*" They call the blood of the cross, "*foolishness.*" They call the sin-offering of Calvary, "*Foolishness.*"
Listen to me; how do I know that, listen to me carefully?

**"I do believe, I will believe
That Jesus died for me
And with His blood, His precious blood
He shed to set me free."**

Now, is that a song that an educated man, a professor or a scientist would sing? Is that a song that a person high up in prestige and power in this world would sing? Well of course not, how simple, how crude, how foolish to talk about the blood setting us free, how fanatical, foolishness, foolishness!

Listen to this:

**"Alas and did my Saviour bleed
And would my Sovereign die?
Would He devote that sacred head?
For such a worm as I?"**

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Now, I ask you; is that a fit song for a man of wealth, a man of worldly honor, a man of great dignity and fame to sing? Why they say, “We’re not worms, we’re not wretches; we’re men of dignity, we’re men of distinction.” “Would He devote that sacred head? For such a worm as I?” Foolishness! How absurd!

Listen to this:

**“In my hands no price I bring
Simply to His cross I cling
Could my tears forever flow?
Could my enthusiasm and my zeal
No respite know?
These for sin could never atone
Christ must save
His blood alone.”**

Now I ask you, is that a fit song for a man of religion, for a man of zeal and enthusiasm and dedication to sing, a man who’s given his life to the ministry and to helping people, who’s giving his life to a service in the church, to mankind? What a humbling song. How degrading, how it destroys human pride. “In my hands no price I bring, simply to the cross I cling.”

“How foolish;” that’s what He said, *“The message of the cross is foolishness to them who are perishing.”*

Listen to this:

**“So far from God I seem to lie
It makes me often weep and cry
Like one alone I seem to be
Oh is there anyone like me?
My nature’s so prone to sin
It makes even my duties so unclean
That when I count up all the cost
If not for His blood I’d be totally lost.”**

Now I ask you; is that a song for people who are church members, sanctified, separated, and consecrated as we are to sing? Why we go to church on Sunday and teach Sunday school and pray and give our tithes. And we’re going to worldly places and worldly habits and worldly amusement. We’re not like other men. How absurd to talk about, “Is there anyone like me? My nature’s prone to sin. It makes my duties seem like foolishness.” That’s what He said it is, *“To them who are perishing, the cross is foolishness.”*

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For that cross says, God must punish your sins. That cross says, *“God almighty must be just and God will in no wise clear the guilty.”* And we’re guilty. That cross says that, *“God will show mercy to whom He will show mercy. He will be gracious to whom He will be gracious.”*

That’s what that cross says. That cross says, there’s no other way, not by church membership, not by baptism, not by good works, not by good deeds, not by humanitarianism, not by all these other things, but by His blood we’re redeemed. That’s what that cross says.

That cross says, there’s no other way to God except by the blood. *“It is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul. I’ve given it to you upon the alter to make an atonement for your soul.”* And there’s no other way.

And that’s what that cross says and the world says, *“Foolishness; to them who are perishing.”* They may be perishing in the pulpit or in the pew or in the world but they are still perishing. And to them it is *“Foolishness.”*

To think I come as a beggar, to think as I come empty handed, to think that I come as one like the Publicans and the harlots. To think that I come like the Publican in the temple; *“God be merciful to me a sinner.”* I can’t come that way and the cross is foolishness.

Well wait; I’m not through. *“The message of the cross is to them who are perishing foolishness. But to those who are being saved it’s the power of God.”*

Tell me you who believe in the cross of Christ, you who believe in the sufferings of Christ. What do you say about incarnation, *“The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth?”* What do you say about God becoming a man? Well, I say it’s the power of God.

What do you say about the sacrifice at Calvary, that perfect, holy, spotless, Lamb of the living God, taking our place, our guilt, our shame, and our filth in His body on the tree and there bearing the wrath of God in our place? What do you say about that, foolishness? It’s the power of God.

What do you say about His blood which came spurting forth from the wounds in His hands, in His feet, in His brow, and in His side? What do you say about that precious crimson flood that flowed from Calvary’s cross? What do you say about that precious blood? What do you say? It’s the power of God.

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What do you say about His sin-offering? God almighty cannot be just unless sin has an offering, a suitable offering, an effectual offering, and an infinite offering. What do you say about it? And God almighty can't just overlook sin; it has to be punished. His justice has to be satisfied. What do you say? It's the power of God.

What do you say about them taking His dead body down from that tree and wrapping it in a winding cloth and putting it in a grave and there it laid for three days? And on the morning of the third day He came forth. What do you say? It's the power of God. It's the power of God to give me life, the power of God to give me life."

Paul said in **Ephesians 2:1**; "*You hath He quickened, you hath He made alive who were dead, dead, in trespasses and sin.*" Dead by your representative Adam, dead by your birth, dead by your nature, dead by your practice, and dead in sin. But God in His power and in His grace through the sacrifice of His Son made you alive.

And I'll tell you this; that power of God with which He created this world is no greater than that power of God with which He made you a new creature in Christ Jesus, the same God who spoke the world of nothing and brought forth spiritual life in your heart out of nothing.

The new birth is not something the preacher gives you or the church gives you or you give yourself; the new birth is something that God gives you. We're born of God. It's the gift of God.

It's the work of God. It's the operation of the Holy Spirit. We're born of the Spirit of the living God, "*not of the will of the flesh, not of the will of man, but born of God.*" It's the power of God not only to give me life but it's the power of God to keep me alive spiritually, to keep me in Christ.

Paul said; "*I'm persuaded, (I'm confident) neither death nor life, angels nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, can separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.*"

That power by which God sustains this world and keeps every star in its proper order and chart and course is no greater than the power with which He keeps me and you from the evil one and from trial, and from tribulation, and from ultimately falling. "*We're kept by the power of God through faith. Unto Him who is able to keep you from falling and to one day present you faultless before His throne with exceeding joy (glory),*" to Him, it's His power.

It is the power of God to cleanse me:

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**“There’s a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Emanuel’s veins
And sinners plunged beneath that blood
Lose all their guilty stains.”**

My friends, I’m not ashamed of the Gospel. Don’t tack names, liberal, conservative, or anything else. I’m just not ashamed of the Gospel. I’m not ashamed of the blood which Christ shed on Calvary. I’m not ashamed of what the Word of God says is the way of life. It’s the way of Calvary.

**“I must needs go home
By the way of the cross
There’s no other way but this
I’ll never get sight of the gates of light
If the way of the cross I miss.”**

And this is not the way of baptism and the way of denominationalism and the way of good works; it’s the way of Calvary. And only sinners walk that way. Needy creatures come by Calvary’s cross.

It is the power of God to raise me. I’ll tell you, the power to make a new heaven and a new earth is no greater than the power by which God almighty one day will empty the grave and bring me forth in the likeness of His Son Jesus Christ.

What do I think of the cross? When I look yonder to Calvary where the Son of God bled and died, where that great one offering, one sacrifice for sin was offered on Calvary, the Lamb of God that died to take away the sin of the world; what do I think about it?

You call it foolishness if you want to but I’m telling you, *“It’s the power and the wisdom of God.”* I see how, *“God can be just and justify the ungodly.”* I see how God can honor His law and at the same time set the sinner free.

I see how God can punish sin and at the same time let the guilty go free. I see how that God’s justice and righteousness can be satisfied and God’s mercy and love also can be satisfied. I see wisdom in that cross, I see wisdom.

And I see the power of God, the power to give me life, power to sustain that life, power to cleanse me and power one day to raise me from the grave.

“Oh Lord, thou art the sinner’s friend

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**As such, I look to thee
Now in the covenant of thy eternal grace
Dear Lord, remember me.**

**Remember thou pure word of grace
Remember Calvary
Remember all thy dying groans
And dear Lord, remember me
Thou mighty Advocate with God
I yield myself to thee
While thou art sitting on thy throne
Dear Lord, remember me.**

**I own I'm guilty
I own I'm vile
And yet thy salvation's free
There in all thy abounding grace
Dear Lord, remember me.**

**However forsaken or distressed
However oppressed I may be
However afflicted here on this earth
My prayer is dear Lord remember me."**

**And when I close my eyes in death."
And creature's help's all fail
Then oh my redeemer God
I pray remember me**

The preaching of the cross, the message of the cross, the power of God!